Why Couples are Championing Gender Equity in Senegal

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**SUMMARY**

SPRING’s Gender Champion Approach aims to increase men and women’s partnership within the household in order to impact nutrition outcomes. This is done by encouraging women’s participation in household financial and nutrition-related decision-making, and men’s involvement in nutrition and hygiene-related tasks. SPRING identified men who were well known within their communities for performing desired gender-supportive roles. The men and their wives attended a one-day training, where they were equipped with the knowledge and tools to become community advocates for gender equality, with a particular focus placed on relieving women’s workload. These champion couples are now recognized as leaders by their peers and are influencing others to follow their example and ultimately improve nutrition outcomes in their communities.

**TRANSCRIPT**

**Voice Over**: The heavy workload of women has negative effects on women's access to income, food security, and on their health and nutritional status. Funded by USAID, the SPRING project aims to improve the nutritional status of pregnant and lactating women and children under two. One of SPRING's multi-sectoral intervention areas involves the promotion of gender-sensitive best practices, particularly the support of men with household and homestead gardening chores as well as hygiene within the compound and family nutrition.

To accomplish this, SPRING uses its gender champion approach. SPRING identified men that were well known within their communities given the active role they play to reduce their wives’ workload and trained them and their spouses on nutrition related gender-sensitive best practices. These champion couples are now committed to sharing their experiences and what they have learned to raise awareness on these issues within their communities.

How do you reduce your wife's workload and improve the quality of hygiene and nutrition in your household?

**Ablaye Senghor (Nguekokh, Foundiougne):** Each morning, I head to the well in my horse-drawn wagon to fetch water in plastic cans. I bring the water home to make my wife’s tasks easier.

**Samba Ndiaye (Kacothie, Kaolack);** When my wife sweeps, I use my rake to gather the trash then we collect the trash together and throw it away. When I come home and my wife is busy, I give the children a bath, clean them after they use the toilet, and I even cook for them.

**Aly Willane (Niollé, Khoungheul):** I granted land to women here in Niollé Wolof. I built the planting beds, and helped them build the fence so that animals can’t get in.

Why do you assist your wife in this way?

**Samba Ndiaye:** The house belongs to both of us and one person cannot do all the work alone.

**Aly Willane:** If we help our wives so that they are less stressed, the peace will be felt throughout the household. This is our responsibility as fathers. If we help make our wives’ work easier, they can earn income for the household. This helps them with their work and makes our lives easier.

**Ablaye Senghor:** I decided to help my wife like this because I know how heavy her workload is. If I can help her by fetching water, she will have more time to take care of the children, like making breakfast so they can go to school on time.

How do you feel about your husband’s support?

**Khady Signaré (Niollé, Khongheul):** This support allows us to have time for our own activities, like gardening, which provides food to better feed our families. This is important as it supplements our family income.

**Maguette Mbaye (Kacothie, Kaolack):** My husband understands that helping clean is good for our family. If he didn’t clean, the children might touch germs that give them diarrhea or other diseases and we would both be affected because we would have to spend money to treat it.

**Mariama Dieye (Diamwelly, Nioro):** My husband helps out in my garden by preparing the crop beds and watering the crops. This helps me have more time to properly take care of the children.

**Khadiom Ndiaye (Ngekokh, Foundiougne):** I can now finish my activities sooner because I don’t have to go to the well for water and this allows me to take care of my children, my husband, and my whole family. My friends always speak about my husband’s support. In community events, people refer to me as the wife of a champion. It all makes me very happy.

How do other community members view the support you provide to your wife?

**Sette Thiam (Diamwelly, Nioro):** Some people assumed I was a weak man because I help my wife. But I talk to as many people as I can to raise awareness about why it’s important. This has led to many changes here in Diamwelly and in neighboring villages. Many men help their wives, especially with market gardening activities. They understand the importance of helping like this. If you return this evening for example, you will see a dozen men arriving to assist their wives.

**Aly Willane:** Many thought I was a weak man but soon they saw the income from the women’s work and how they were less stressed all because of this support. And now all my peers that thought helping your wife was absurd have seen the benefits of helping one’s wife.

**Ablaye Senghor:** Before my peers would make fun of me by calling me “the one that fetches water for his wife”and I would tell them that it is a good thing to help your wife with household tasks. Now many of them imitate me. Many fetch water at the well for their wives. I encourage all men to help their wives with their chores especially fetching water.

**Voice Over:** The increased involvement of men in household and homestead gardening chores, in hygiene within the compound, and in nutrition is greatly appreciated within communities. The adoption of these gender-sensitive best practices can improve harmony in the home, free up a woman's time to engage in income-generating activities, and improve the health and nutritional status of women, children, and men in the household. We hope to see this gender champion approach scaled up to contribute to women’s empowerment and improve the wellbeing of families throughout Senegal.

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